

Out Of the Bog!

- Sindisiwe Mawetu

A YOUNG COMRADE WHOSE PATRIOTIC MOTIVATION WAS BETRAYED BY THE PAC FOLLOWING THE 1976 URSURGES, LATER FOUND HER WAY INTO THE REVOLUTIONARY RANKS OF OUR PEOPLE'S ARMY, UMKHONTO WE SIZWE. HER EXPERIENCES ARE HORRID, HEARTBREAKING AND AT THE SAME TIME A DANGER-SIGNAL TO THE LENGTHS TO WHICH SOME PEOPLE GO IN AN ATTEMPT TO DRIVE WEDGES BETWEEN THE RANKS OF THE GENUINE PATRIOTIC FORCES OF OUR MOTHERLAND.

WE HASTEN TO STRESS THAT WHEREAS IT IS NOT OUR INTENTION TO LABOUR ON THE PAC'S UNPLEASANT BACKGROUND - THE PEOPLE KNOW IT QUITE WELL - WE SHALL NOT SIT BACK WHEN THE CONSCIOUS AND PATRIOTIC ENDEAVOURS OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE ARE MOLESTED AND FRUSTRATED BY TRICKSTERS WHO MASQUERADE AS SO-CALLED LEADERS OF THE OPPRESSED.

THE TRUTH WILL OUT, BUT NOT OF ITS OWN ACCORD! SO, LET COMRADE SINDISIWE TELL HER STORY TO ALL OF US; FRIENDS, RELATIVES, LOVED ONES, COMPATRIOTS AND THE CONSCIOUS WORLD, AS A DUTY TO HER MOTHERLAND AND FOR THE EDIFICATION OF OUR YOUNG MILITANTS.

Like every African child in South Africa, I had a very miserable childhood as a result of the disabilities generated by the inhuman system of Apartheid. The injustices perpetrated by the racists against our people aroused in me an implacable hatred for the system and a strong desire to put an end to continued enslavement and strangulation of the Black masses - though at first I never had a clear idea as to how best could this be achieved.

The 1976 June 16 massacres when trigger-happy fascist police and soldiers mowed down unarmed students convinced me more than anything that armed struggle was the only option left to the oppressed in the quest for freedom and an end to apartheid rule. Moved by this realisation, I joined other students

who had also made up their minds to leave the country for military training. We immediately set out to find a person who could assist us in this regard.

We thought ourselves lucky when we met a certain Thami who claimed to be assisting people who intended leaving the country. After making the necessary arrangements, he ultimately left with us clandestinely for Swaziland.

Upon arrival in Swaziland, excited and full of expectation, we asked him to take us to the ANC. To our dismay, he refused saying that the ANC was not the correct organisation for any of us. As we were young, uninformed on most fundamental questions of our struggle, and above all, thirsty for guidance, we had no other alternative but to listen to Thami. This seemed to have been just the moment he had been waiting for: he rained a torrent of anti-ANC propaganda on us. He told us of how the ANC was dominated by Whites and Communists like Joe Slovo; how they (ANC) were selling people to Russians, Cubans, East Germans, and that Soviet support for the ANC had colonialist designs which were to be implemented after we have won our independence. According to him the only genuine Socialist countries in the world were China, Albania and Pol Pot's Kampuchea - the Soviet Union and all the others were revisionists. The novel rhetoric and the issues left us spell-bound and we swallowed Thami's story as he presented it.

LIES AND SLANDER

He went on to tell us of the fierce power struggle and rabid factionalism in the ANC. He told us of how one faction was loyal to Whites and Communists, one to O.R. Tambo and the other to Nelson Mandela. Unknown to us was the fact that we were undergoing a mind-conditioning course aimed at reducing us to so many vessels ever ready to be filled up with lies and slander.

Thami later took us to a certain Mkhwanazi who is one of the PAC leaders. Mkhwanazi is the one who subsequently sent us to Tanzania, where we expected to undergo military training.

At Dar-es-Salaam airport we were met by a group of armed PAC men. They whisked us aside and demanded to know the group to which we belonged - Potlako Leballo's or Ntantala's. I could not understand the meaning of all this as we were only just arriving and hardly informed about such division within the PAC. This was before we were taken to a residence in Dar-es-Salaam where I met my younger brother. My brother advised me not to join Ntantala's faction since it was dominated by tribalists. He further told me that the Ntantala group was accusing

Leballo of selling out and working for the CIA. Heeding to a brotherly advice, I chose to join Leballo's faction.

Potlako Leballo, promised to send us to a country here in Africa, for military training. We were then divided into two groups - one accompanied by 'ugly' girls and the other by 'beautiful' girls. (The lamentable criteria of 'beautiful' and 'ugly' was Leballo's ludicrous method of categorising women) Whilst our group (the one of ugly girls) was to be sent to X, the other was to be sent to Uganda to impress upon Idi Amin that South Africa has beautiful women, we were told.

Ultimately we left for X. On arrival there we were surprised to find ourselves being sent to a Health Institute instead of a military establishment. At the institute we met a number of women from the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU-PF). When we told them of our PAC membership they responded with comradely explanation though disapproving of our affiliation. They told us that the only Liberation Movement of South Africa, genuinely representing popular aspirations was the ANC. This provoked more discussion and debate through which we were able to gather a lot of valuable information on the history and policies of the ANC. We also learnt of the historic ZAPU-ANC Alliance of 1967 and the gallantry and valour of our brothers who fought in Wankie and Sipolilo during the 1967-68 campaigns.

Here in X the going was a bit tough for us. Most of our needs were inadequately met. Throughout the entire eight months duration of our course we never had a single visit by any of the PAC leaders. At some stage we confronted one Victor Mayekiso, the then PAC Chief Representative to X. Mayekiso told us that he had little time for visits since he was too busy infiltrating weapons and personnel into the country (SA).

On completion of our course we were stranded and had nowhere to go. We felt like derelicts forsaken by our PAC. We spent two months idling and wondering what to do next. Destitute and want became so sharp that some of us ended up being adopted by some of the kind-hearted families of X. At this stage Mayekiso was nowhere to be found. We demanded to be sent back to Tanzania but the government authorities felt that this had to be done with the consent of the PAC chief representative. Eventually they saw reason in our demands because, among other things, we were becoming a burden to them.

"BAD ELEMENTS"

In Tanzania the situation was no better - our PAC was unable to provide us with sufficient food. After staying a

few days in Dar-es-Salaam we were taken to a place called Mbea. Later we were to learn that people being sent to Mbea were 'bad elements'. We had acquired this label probably because of the many questions we began to ask after our nightmarish adventure in X.

Life in Mbea was too difficult to bear. We met two males here who were amongst several disillusioned with the PAC's brigand tendencies. Together we decided to leave Mbea and head for another PAC place nearby. This was during the time when the power struggle and factionalism in the PAC had reached its highest ebb. Potlako Leballo had been expelled and in his stead David Sibeko elected Chairman. Sibeko was quite a character - he used to claim operations like the assault on the Moroka police station to be the work of the PAC and would even ingeniously cook up names of people who had taken part in the operation. Besides the Sibeko group there was a faction loyal to Ntantala whilst another third faction which termed itself 'neutral' was also in existence. After Sibeko's death, it transpired that this faction was in fact another Leballo Front. Arriving in this situation at such a critical moment, it was demanded of us to declare our loyalties, but we pretended to want to go steady.

CONFUSING SET-UP

Trapped in this confusing set-up, I felt more disillusioned with the PAC than ever before - the only strong urge that continued burning lively in me was the wish to find the best way of throwing my lot with those genuinely committed to the struggle for the liberation of our people. I therefore asked to be sent to school, hoping that if they (PAC) conceded and sent me to Dar-es-Salaam it would then be possible for me to leave the PAC ranks once and for all time. Fortunately things went my way and I was taken to Dar. Though my intention was to join the ANC, I was hesitant for a while due to the slanderous anti-ANC harangues we were fed with in the PAC. We had been told that people who deserted the PAC for the ANC are taken to Angola to be killed and if not, they would be maltreated and will always feel ostracised because of the bad attitude ANC people have towards the PAC.

But when I finally made my dash for the ANC a pleasant surprise was lying in store for me. The first ANC comrades I met patiently explained and acquainted me with the traditions, attitudes and norms of the ANC. Through such discussions I got to know of many young people who deserted the P A C - some of whom I had known from home - who were now responsible

and very determined cadres of the ANC. Some of them - I soon learnt - were already inside the country, locked in uncompromising battles against the enemy of our people. This was just enough to convince me of the correctness of my decision. Sometimes I pause to wonder whether it was fate that led me to waste two valuable years of my life-time in the PAC, for those two years I was tossing on the ocean and hardly ever got to understand the PAC's programme and policy - everything fluctuated and changed with the passing day.

THE ANC

Here in the ANC I find life exceedingly different: There seems to be more purposefulness and an abounding methodical spirit in everything that concerns the struggle for the realisation of the aspirations of our people. For the first time during my stay in exile I could attend political discussions, conferences and seminars. Now I am exposed to real political education aimed at shaping a progressive world outlook and a firm base upon which unflinching determination and devotion to the course that will definitely flourish. This is directly opposite to what I experienced in the PAC - their so-called political work is, in a nutshell, Anti-ANC and Anti-Communism pitched-talk and harangue. In the ANC nobody waste their time in attacking the PAC for every minute is dedicated to the people's cause and the necessary details of our revolutionary struggle.

At last I am politically fully matured. My dream of becoming a people's soldier has come true. I am a well-trained soldier of the South African revolution serving in the MK, ready to go into action at any point and time. No words can sufficiently express my joy at belonging to Umkhonto, but still my heart aches when I think of the many sons and daughters of our country who have, like me, been misled and fell into wrong hands. It is my hope and belief that one day they will see the light as the struggle steadily unfolds, so as to be able also to come out of the bog and join the genuine mainstream of revolution as led by the ANC. In conclusion, I can do no better than to reiterate the words of Comrade President O.R. Tambo, that: "A people, a country, a movement that does not value its youth does not deserve its future".
